CLAIMS

1.   A method of determining the status of an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call comprising:

    A.   placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a telephone number at which a target person is listed;

    B.   upon said telephone call being answered, initiating a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

    C.   receiving a spoken response from an answering person;

    D.   performing a speech recognition analysis on said spoken response to determine a status of said spoken response; and

    E.   if said speech recognition analysis determines that said answering person is said target person, initiating a speech recognition application with said target person.

2.   The method of claim 1 wherein, in step D, if said speech recognition analysis determines that said spoken response indicates that said answering person is not said target person, a next step comprises initiating a prerecorded query asking for said target person.

3.   The method of claim 2 wherein, upon said target person answering said telephone call, said method further comprises initiating a speech recognition application with said target person.

4.   The method of claim 1 wherein, in step D, if said speech recognition analysis determines that said spoken response indicates that said target person is not present at said

3   location, a next step comprises initiating a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for said

4   target person.

1   5.   The method of claim 4 further comprising a step of providing a prerecorded

2   message to said answering person.

1   6.   The method of claim 1 wherein, in step D, if said speech recognition analysis

2   determines that said spoken response is a hold request, a next step comprises entering a wait state

3   to wait for said target person to provide a spoken response to said telephone call.

1   7.   The method of claim 6 wherein, upon said target person providing a spoken

2   response to said telephone call, said method further comprises initiating a speech recognition

3   application with said target person.

1   8.   The method of claim 1 wherein, in step D, if said speech recognition analysis

2   determines that said spoken response is a request for the identity of the entity responsible for the

3   calling system, the method further comprises initiating a prerecorded response indicating the

4   identity of the calling party, repeating said prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person,

5   and repeating step C through step E.

1   9.   The method of claim 1 wherein, in step D, if said speech recognition analysis

2   determines that said spoken response indicates that said telephone number is not the correct

3   number for the target person, the method further comprises initiating a prerecorded apology

4   message and terminating said telephone call.

1   10.   The method of claim 1 wherein, in step D, if said speech recognition analysis

2   cannot determine a status of said spoken response, said method further comprises repeating said

3   prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E.

1   11.   A system for determining the status of an answered telephone during the course of

2   an outbound telephone call comprising:

3   an automated telephone calling device for placing a telephone call to a location having a

4   telephone number at which a target person is listed; and

5   a speech recognition device which, upon said telephone call being answered, initiates a

6   prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, receives a spoken response from an

7   answering person and performs a speech recognition analysis on said spoken response to

8   determine a status of said spoken response;

9   wherein, if said speech recognition device determines that said answering person is said

10   target person, said speech recognition device initiates a speech recognition application with said

11   target person.

1   12.   The system of claim 11 wherein, if said speech recognition device determines that

2   said spoken response indicates that said answering person is not said target person, said speech

3   recognition system instructs said automated telephone calling device to initiate a prerecorded

4   query asking for said target person.

1   13.   The system of claim 12 wherein, upon said target person answering said

2   telephone call, said speech recognition system initiates a speech recognition application with said

3   target person.

1   14.   The system of claim 11 wherein, if said speech recognition device determines

2   that said spoken response indicates that said target person is not present at said location, said

3   speech recognition system instructs said automated telephone calling device to initiate a

4   prerecorded query asking to leave a message for said target person.

1   15.   The system of claim 14 wherein said automated telephone calling device provides

2   a prerecorded message to said answering person.

16.   The system of claim 11 wherein, if said speech recognition device determines that

said spoken response is a hold request, said speech recognition enters a wait state to wait for said

target person to provide a spoken response to said telephone call.

17.   The system of claim 16 wherein, when said speech recognition device determines

that said target person has provided a spoken response to said telephone call, said speech

recognition device initiates a speech recognition application with said target person.

1   18.   The system of claim 11 wherein, if said speech recognition device determines that

2   said spoken response is a request for the identity of the entity responsible for the automated

3   calling device, the speech recognition system instructs said automated telephone calling device

4   to initiate a prerecorded response indicating the identity of the entity and to repeat said

5   prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

6   wherein, upon receiving a spoken response from the answering person, said speech

7   recognition device performs a speech recognition analysis on said spoken response to determine

8   the status of said spoken response.

1	19.	The method of claim 11 wherein, if said speech recognition device determines

2	that said spoken response indicates that said telephone number is not the correct number for the

3	target person, said speech recognition system instructs said automated telephone calling device

4	to initiate a prerecorded apology message and to terminate said telephone call.

1	20.	The method of claim 11 wherein, if said speech recognition device cannot

2	determine a status of said spoken response, said speech recognition system instructs said

3	automated telephone calling device to repeat said prerecorded greeting which asks for the target

4	person;

5	wherein, upon receiving a spoken response from the answering person, said speech

6	recognition device performs a speech recognition analysis on said spoken response to determine

7	the status of said spoken response.

1	21.	A method for determining the status of an answered telephone during the course

2	of an outbound telephone call comprising:

3	A.	placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a

4	telephone number at which a target person is listed;

5	B.	upon said telephone call being answered, initiating a prerecorded greeting which

6	asks for the target person;

7	C.	receiving a spoken response from an answering person;

8	D.	performing a speech recognition analysis on said spoken response to determine a

9	status of said spoken response; and

10	E.	providing at least one of the following responses based on said speech recognition

11	analysis:

12   a. if said speech recognition analysis determines that said answering person is

13 said target person, initiating a speech recognition application with said target person;

14   b. if said speech recognition analysis determines that said spoken response

15 indicates that said answering person is not said target person, initiating a prerecorded query

16 asking for said target person, wherein, upon said target person answering said telephone call,

17 said method further comprises initiating a speech recognition application with said target person;

18   c. if said speech recognition analysis determines that said spoken response

19 indicates that said target person is not present at said location, initiating a prerecorded query

20 asking to leave a message for said target person;

21   d. if said speech recognition analysis determines that said spoken response is a

22 hold request, entering a wait state to wait for said target person to provide a spoken response to

23 said telephone call, wherein, upon said target person providing a spoken response to said

24 telephone call, said method further comprises initiating a speech recognition application with

25 said target person;

26   e. if said speech recognition analysis determines that said spoken response is a

27 request for the identity of the entity responsible for the calling system, initiating a prerecorded

28 response indicating the identity of the calling party, repeating said prerecorded greeting which

29 asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E;

30   f. if said speech recognition analysis determines that said spoken response

31 indicates that said telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, initiating a

32 prerecorded apology message and terminating said telephone call; and

33   g. if said speech recognition analysis cannot determine a status of said spoken

34   response, repeating said prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step

35   C through step E.

1   22.   A method of detecting an answering machine comprising:

2   A.   placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a

3   telephone number at which a target person is listed;

4   B.   upon said telephone call being answered, waiting for a predetermined time period

5   for a spoken response;

6   C.   upon receiving said spoken response, playing a prerecorded greeting prompt

7   which asks for said target person;

8   D.   while playing said prerecorded greeting prompt, attempting to detect a further

9   spoken response in excess of a predetermined time parameter;

10   E.   in the absence of detecting said further spoken response during the playing of said

11   prerecorded greeting prompt, initiating a query application;

12   F.   upon detecting said further spoken response during the playing of said

13   prerecorded greeting prompt, terminating the playing of said prerecorded prompt; and

14   G.   indicating that an answering machine has been detected.

1   23.   The method of claim 22 further comprising the step of attempting to detect a beep

2   tone during the playing of said prerecorded greeting prompt and, upon the detection of a beep

3   tone, interrupting the prerecorded greeting prompt and playing a prerecorded answering machine

4   message prompt.

1   24.   The method of claim 23 further comprising attempting to detect a beep tone

2   during the playing of said prerecorded answering machine message prompt and, upon the

3   detection of a beep tone, interrupting said prerecorded answering machine message prompt and

4   replaying said prerecorded prompt.